



Vetqas® Customer Newsletter No.2

Happy New Year and welcome to the second Vetqas newsletter, which we hope will continue to provide you with both informative and interesting information. In this edition, we feature potential developments in Proficiency Testing (PT) for PCR tests, additional accreditation for the QA unit and some important changes to our sample distribution service.

A major change during 2011 was the creation of the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA). This was the result of the merger between Animal Health and the Veterinary Laboratories Agency. AHVLA is an executive agency working on behalf of the Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), Scottish Government and Welsh Government and has a clear mission to safeguard animal health and welfare as well as public health, protect the economy and enhance food security through research, surveillance and inspection.

As you are probably already aware, the Agency has developed commercial products and services over the years and made them available to organisations around the world. These services, including Vetqas, have now been brought together under AHVLA Scientific but please be assured that the Vetqas team has not altered and remains committed to delivering your proficiency testing requirements.

Vetqas awarded ISO/IEC 17043:2010

(for more information, see article on page 2)

As a PT provider, we recognise that the best way to support our customers is to invest in the highest quality standards.





What does the future hold?

Laboratory testing is changing across all areas of science, including the veterinary arena and new methods are continually being introduced to help improve our PT services and schemes. As a consequence of this activity, Vetqas conducted a market research survey to gather information on current developments, customers use of PCR methods and PT requirements for the future.

The survey was designed to establish which laboratories are using PCR routinely, which PCR PT methods are currently available and what potential improvements to PCR PT schemes are being developed. Interviewees were from the UK and international laboratories and included government and academic organisations.

Results indicated a predominance of PCR use in virological laboratories but a more limited use in other disciplines, such as microbiology and parasitology. Key areas for PCR testing appeared to be swine fever, avian influenza and Newcastle disease but customer's views predicted a continuing expansion of PCR tests across a variety of diseases.

This information is really helpful and will enable the Vetqas team to expand the range of PCR PT schemes currently available. Our aim is to validate more of our existing schemes and develop new ones. We will send you further information when it becomes available.



Vetqas PT Schemes awarded ISO/IEC 17043:2010

We are delighted to announce that the unit was granted accreditation to:

ISO/IEC 17043:2010

Conformity assessment - requirements for proficiency testing

This accreditation specifies general requirements for the competence of providers of PT schemes and for the development and operation of PT schemes. These requirements are intended to be general for all types of PT schemes and they can be used as a basis for specific technical requirements for particular fields of application. This standard, published in 2010, replaces ISO Guide 43:1997 and will also replace the criteria currently used for the assessment of PT Providers described in ILAC G13:2007.

The AHVLA QA unit is certified to ISO9001:2008. Many of the verification tests for PT samples, carried out by the AHVLA Laboratory Services, are accredited to ISO 17025.



We deliver!

The distribution of Vetqas test samples is a complex business and we constantly seek to make it easier, reliable and trouble free.

Courier Delivery – this is the most effective way to send PT samples to customers quickly to enable those samples to be tested before the deadline date. All courier parcels are tracked. Specific samples **MUST** be sent by courier and these are indicated in our price list.

Airmail – this service is included in the price of specific schemes but, there have been problems with delayed or non-delivery of airmail parcels. There is no tracking facility and we are unable to guarantee a delivery date as we have no control over local postal systems.

Lost Samples - we can usually issue repeats of lost samples or extend the results deadline for a maximum of six days for delays. This can reduce the time for comments from the test commentator and the issue of the tabulated report to all participants.

We are making some improvements to our delivery service from April 2012. These include:

More opportunities for combined packing

Distribution weeks have been changed for some of our schemes to enable preparation, packing and storage of PT samples, prior to despatch, to be more efficient. The distribution months remain unaltered.

Combined packing

From 1st April 2012, any samples that are being sent to a customer on the same date will be packed into one parcel. The only exceptions are samples sent in Biofreeze bottles, which can only be packed with other Biofreeze samples and samples sent on dry-ice. For customers that already have parcels sent by courier, their renewal contract documents will include any combined courier costs.

Despatch notification

Our on-line system has been updated to automatically send emails to all participants to ensure you are aware the samples have been despatched.

No increase in Courier costs

We are pleased to announce that we will not be increasing our courier costs for 2012-13.



Please contact us for a quote if you would like to change to courier delivery for samples currently sent by air mail. For advance notice of when the samples are due to be issued you can find the dates of issue on our website.



A Reminder!

Vetqas introduced its first bacterial isolation PT scheme for small animals and two new histopathology services during 2011.

The small animal microbiological scheme, (PT0140) was specifically designed for laboratories that regularly handle sample submissions from companion animal clinical practice. Simulated specimens are provided for analysis and they contain the most commonly isolated organisms from small animals as well as some that are less common.

The histopathology schemes, Cellular Pathology Technique (CPT) (PT0166) and Veterinary Immunohistochemistry (IHC) (PT0167) each include two paraffin wax sections issued six times per year. These are submitted by participants and returned to Vetqas for assessment. The CPT requires the participating laboratory to submit two further 'in house' H&E stained slides whereas the IHC requires the submission of one further 'in house' control for each specific antibody assessment.

To find more details of these and any other Schemes, please visit our website.

Customer survey

“Thank you to all of those who took part in the annual customer satisfaction survey. If you have any specific concerns or feedback you would like to discuss with us, please contact the Vetqas team directly who will be happy to help.”

Event dates

Vetqas will be attending the following exhibitions, please visit our stand:

8th International Symposium of Avian Influenza - 1-4 April 2012, Royal Holloway College, University of London, UK

6th Annual Meeting of Epizone 2012 - 12-14 June 2012, Institute of Animal Health, Brighton, UK

2nd EAVLD Congress 2012 - 1-4 July 2012, Kazimierz Dolny, Poland

19th Congress of the International Organisation of Mycoplasma - 15-20 July 2012, Toulouse, France

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